Telephone Exchange at Basot, Almora District

*335. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some villages like Tarari, Dungari, Darmoli, Bamora and Maidari of Bhandarkhola adjoining Basot Telephone Exchange, District Almora of Uttaranchal are still deprived of telephone facility inspite of setting up a new telephone exchange at Basot;

(b) if so, the reasons for making villagers wait for telephone; and

(c) whether Government propose to provide such telephone connections by increasing the capacity of the exchange and laying of Optical Fibre Cable?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) Basot Telephone Exchange has equipped capacity of 152 lines and 53 working connections. The villages Tarari, Dungri, Darmoli, Bamora and Maidari are beyond local area of Basot Telephone Exchange and scattered. These villages are planned to be covered on land lines by March' 2002. However, at present there is not registered demand from these villages for provision of telephone connections.

There is no plan to increase the capacity of this exchange as sufficient spare capacity is already available to meet the present demand. Basot Telephone Exchange is parented o Bhatronjkhan exchange which is working on reliable MCPC (Multi Channel Per Carrier) media. However, this media is proposed to be replaced by Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) media during 2002-2003.

Establishment of FTA with Pakistan

*336. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken up the matter with Pakistan for establishing Free Trading Agreement (FTA) on the lines of India-Sri Lanka (FTA) for greater trade, investment flow and strengthening of economic relationship;

(b) if so, the response thereto; and

(c) if not, the action proposed in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) There is no proposal presently to have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan on the lines of India — Sri Lanka FTA.

Interconnection Agreement of BSNL with Cellular Operators

*337. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited proposes to review the interconnection agreement signed with the basic telecom operators with a view to increase its revenues;

(b) if so, whether any talks have been held with the basic telephone operators in the matter; and

(c) whether the basic operators have expressed apprehensions about the proposed policy of Government which may adversely hit them while competing with the low tariff proposed by Government?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has proposed to review the existing Interconnection Agreement with Basic Service Operators (BSOs) to revise the existing revenue sharing arrangements for local and long distance calls in proportion to the usage of their network for origination, carriage and termination of the telephone calls.

Within the framework of the Interconnection Agreement with the private Basic Service Operators, BSNL invited the private BSOs to discuss the proposal for new revenue sharing regime. However, before completion of the discussions, the private Basic Service Operators moved a petition before the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT). While TDSAT has passed an interim order, the matter is still to be finally decided.

Employees Stock Option Scheme

*338. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether companies giving shares to their employees are being brought under "Employees Stock Option Scheme":